

No end in sight: Reflections on recent literature on the destruction of Gaza

European Journal of Social Theory

1–12

© The Author(s) 2026



Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/13684310251414607

journals.sagepub.com/home/est**Wolfgang Streeck** *Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne, Germany*

Fassin, Didier, 2024: *Moral Abdication. How the World Failed to Stop the Destruction of Gaza*. London: Verso. ISBN-13:978-1-80429-967-8

Mishra, Pankaj, 2025: *The World After Gaza*. London: Fern Press. ISBN 9781911717492, 292 pp.

Will the destruction of Gaza, the extermination of its society end before it is completed? Not if the government of Israel, the majority of its citizens and the United States have their way. Israel will never make peace with the Palestinian people, not in Gaza, not in Jerusalem, not on the Westbank. As long there are Palestinians between the river and the sea, they will stand in Israel's way—mission not accomplished. In fact, now, after 2 years of slaughter, peace, whatever its terms, would be nothing short of a national catastrophe for Israel, a devastating defeat. Peace would have to end the blockade of Gaza, which has by now lasted almost two decades, subsidized by four American presidents: Bush, Obama, Biden, and Trump. Gazans would have to be released from their open-air prison, visitors allowed in. Pictures, many more than now, would find their way out of a ravaged landscape of irreparably damaged homes, schools, hospitals, churches, and universities. Stories would be told, of children without parents, parents without children, families without mothers or fathers, emaciated, starved, crippled in body and soul. Investigations would get under way, and not just by the corrupt, Israel-paid so-called Palestinian Authority: witnesses would be heard, memories recorded, events reconstructed, Israeli commanders responsible for the worst crimes identified, and genocide would cease to be a legal abstraction. The state of Israel would finally end up a pariah state, as Germany might have after 1945 had it not been for its American friends needing an ally-vassal against the Soviet Union and for the Korean War. "Enjoy the war, peace will be terrible," Germans used to whisper to each other as WWII drew to a close.

No end in sight. The nightmare will go on, and will be allowed to go on, as long as there are still Palestinians that refuse to be ruled by the likes of Netanyahu. At the time of writing, Israel has captured more than half of the Gaza strip, declaring it a

“security zone” after having emptied it of Gazans, with the tacit agreement of the UN Security Council—a first installment on the Trump Organization’s real estate dream. What remained of the strip has apparently been cut in two halves by the Israeli army, to keep it divided until the Peace Council arrives, run by Trump, with peace as the pursuit of ethnic cleansing with different means. Meanwhile the massacre on the Westbank continues, supported by a large majority of Israeli citizens, with more than a thousand Palestinians killed in the 2 years of the Gaza war by the Army and free-ranging so-called settlers, many of them American citizens regretful of having been born too late for the Indian Wars.

In any case, if something should go wrong, Israel is militarily invincible, thanks to unwavering American and German support, with more than 300 combat-ready fighter jets (Hamas: none), about 50 attack helicopters (Hamas: none), the Iron Dome air defense system (Hamas: nothing like this), 2,200 battle tanks (Hamas: none), and at least 170 Caterpillar D9 bulldozers (Hamas: none), turning what is misnamed a war into a high-tech slaughter of a defenseless people being bombed back into the stone age. Add to this the full trinity of nuclear warfare: land-based missiles, airborne fighter planes and German-supplied nuclear submarines, complemented by the nuclear bomb of propaganda, the accusation of antisemitism, highly effective, as Mishra and Fassin show, in the democracies of the northern hemisphere where it is liberally made use of by Israel’s local supporters.

With the United States unshakingly covering its back, the Israeli government can feel free to continue what the majority of its citizens consider its job: cleansing Gaza of the Gazans. Two years into the war, in late November, 2025, according to statista 69,185 Gazans had been reported as killed (reported by the Hamas Gaza government, which does not count the uncountables, buried under the rubble of houses flattened by Israeli bombers and bulldozers) and 170,698 as injured.¹ In the same period, according to the Israeli government, “since the beginning of ground operations in the Gaza Strip on October 27, 2023, 471 soldiers have fallen in combat,” amounting to less than 20 per month, and a kill ratio of 1:147—a bargain price to pay, making continued warfare politically sustainable in Israel even though the end is far from nigh. According to various estimates, Hamas, stereotypically referred to in the German press as a “terror group,” still had roughly 16,000 to 18,000 fighters under arms by the time the Trump Peace Plan was revealed—compared to between 20,000 to 30,000 it is believed to have had when the massacre began.²

Trump or not, there is no reason for Israel to accept any settlement short of a final conquest of Palestine “from the River to the Sea,” as long envisaged in Netanyahu’s party platform. Unlike the former Yugoslavia, the United States and their West European vassals see in Gaza no “duty to protect”—in the 1990s a celebrated American innovation in international law—unless it was to protect Israel from being held to account for its crimes. If the worst comes to the worst, Israel knows that to keep up the killing, it can rely on the world being scared to death by its “Samson option”: using its nuclear arsenal to ensure that if Israel has to go down, all others around it, in particular Iran and Lebanon, perhaps Egypt and Syria as well, Israel’s “gray zone,” will have to go down together with it. In the unlikely event of its allies deserting it—for example if continuing the war would endanger core interests of the American campaign-financing class

—Israel might feel like the German government towards the end of WWII when it saw its only choice in hoping against hope for a miracle: “We have taken on such enormous guilt that we can only continue; there is no way back” (Heinrich Himmler, allegedly, to a Norwegian diplomat in April 1945). The difference, of course, is that while Germany at the time had no nuclear bombs, Israel does.

So the destruction will continue, physical, institutional, social, moral, almost beyond repair already now. If it ever came to an end, nobody would know how to remove the wreckage left by the bombings, rebuild the houses, hospitals, schools and universities, mosques and churches, the streets and harbors, the sewers and water pipes. (Trump’s golf courses and country clubs could be reached by helicopter, and water and food for the happy few could be brought in by the Peace Board working with the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation.) Where would Gazans live in the meantime? Which country would on behalf of “the International Community” organize first the exodus and then the return, under the watchful eyes of the Israeli Defense Forces and their American brothers-in-arms? Who would pay for the orphanages, the homes for the disabled, the medical care for those who have lost their mind in the bunkers and on the search for food for their families? The Germans will be busy for years to fund their other war, in Ukraine, while their Israeli allies and, of course, the United States surely won’t contribute a penny.

After Gaza, then, there will still be Gaza, for any foreseeable future. Both Fassin and Mishra expect more mass killings, eviction, starvation, perhaps with occasional interruptions for public relations purposes, with short openings of the new, tighter borders of Gaza for supplies small enough to keep people on the brink of starvation—this whole cruel game, faking mercy, then tightening the screws again, accompanied by serial killings of villagers by settler-thugs in the West Bank and the construction of US-funded housing for Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem (let alone of sparkling Trump Hotels in heavily armed scenic spots of Gaza cleansed of its uncouth inhabitants), all of this interspersed with occasional “humanitarian breaks” for the benefit of West European governments, like the air drops of food from Bundeswehr planes, so German news consumers can rest assured that Gazans won’t have to die with an empty stomach. Fassin, finding the Israeli Left “crushed and inaudible” (p. 89f.); the Western countries, under the spell of their Israel lobbies’ anti-antisemitism propaganda, “wholeheartedly support[ing] the Israeli government”; and “the highly popular leader Marwan Barghouti, cast by many as a possible negotiator and future president of the Palestinian Authority... sentenced to five life terms [in Israeli concentration camps], while no Israeli politician seems ready to entertain the possibility of talks” (p. 90)³—Fassin ends his book, for all its admirably sober realism, with a poem written by a Palestinian poet, “shortly before dying on 7 December 2023 in a targeted bombing attack on the flat where he had taken refuge with his sister, who was likewise killed, as was his brother and four of his nephews and nieces” (p. 91).

Of course, it is not only Gaza that would need repair after Gaza; so would Israel, which would have to learn to cease being a killer state, although unlike Germany in 1945 nobody knows who could teach it and how. In fact, for both Fassin and Mishra, Israel’s genocide, in Gaza as well as the Territories, is a moral disaster also for “the West” as a whole, which has given birth to Israel but failed to properly socialize it.

Fassin's brilliantly written, admirably concise little book of no more than 122 pages says and documents everything that is needed for readers to look through the veil of Western governments' and their political classes' double-speak. Its emphasis is on that speech, the crooked language designed for the manufacturing of consent with the signature crime against humanity of our age, for enabling Western publics not to notice the Gazan slaughterhouse and what it does to them too. Chapter 1 recapitulates the treatment in Western accounts of the October 7 Hamas attempt to end 16 years of collective captivity, chapter 2 deals with the strategic use of the concept of terrorism, chapter 3 with that of genocide ("Words matter, especially when they have historical resonance, political meaning and legal implications", p. 26), and chapter 4 with the way the memory of German murderous antisemitism is "instrumentalized" to render Israeli indiscriminate killing and torture unmentionable. Chapter 5 details the rise of censorship in what used to be liberal democracies, chapter 6 depicts the silence of Western public voices on the effects of the multiple de-humanization of the people of Gaza by their decades-long captivity, while chapter 7 describes the systematic obfuscation in Western speak of the ethno-colonialist purpose of the Israeli occupation of Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank, while chapter 8 summarizes what Fassin means by "moral abdication": the systematic corruption of words so as to make them unfit to distinguish between good and evil. Here (p. 88) Fassin quotes Thucydides on the Peloponnesian war, who noted how in the course of increasingly senseless destruction "even the usual meaning of words in relation to acts was changed in the justifications given to them." It is not least "these falsifications," so Fassin—an eminent social anthropologist and sociologist—that "justify that social scientists, with humility but determination, make their truth heard, however fragile it may be."

As to Mishra, his book, too, is remarkably well researched—see in particular the long chapters on Germany, "From Antisemitism to Philosemitism," and on the United States, "Americanizing the Holocaust." But most importantly, Mishra goes to great lengths to explain to a White Western audience how the Jews, long considered by the Whites for all practical purposes deeply non-White, came to be invited to join their tormentors when after 1945 they turned Palestine into their nation-state, having in vain tried to emulate Whiteness in Western Europe by treating their Eastern European brethren as though they were colored. Mishra locates the cooptation of Jewry into the white *Herrenrasse*, and the latter's historically unprecedented economic and military support for the state of Israel, not in a sense of guilt on the part of white supremacists for what they had over centuries done to them, but in the politics of de-colonialization in the 1950s and 1960s. Then, as White supremacy was at the brink of collapse, Whites could use an ally to help them stem the anticolonial tide especially in the Middle East—an ally who, unlike the discredited colonists, could claim a historical and moral right, however flimsily concocted, to live and rule where as a people they had after so much suffering been allowed to seek refuge.

Mishra's book gives Western readers an idea of what observers from the Global South see and feel when they regard the utter contempt with which the Zionist settlers treated and continue to treat those whose land they have taken and still are taking. For Mishra this is indistinguishable from the way European settlers in Africa kept local Africans behind the fence of apartheid and from how they felt entitled on the North American continent to extinguish altogether those who were in their way and who they believed were

Indians. In this perspective, whatever differences there may be between Gaza and the Holocaust are less relevant, if at all, than their identical role for the legitimation and defense of White supremacy. In his final chapters Mishra, in the footsteps of Edward Said, presents a remarkable outline of the worldview of what has come to be called “post-colonial theory.” At its center is the unique conquest and destruction of traditional non-White societies all over the world by White imperialism, armed with superior military technology and scientific proof of the “racial” inferiority of their Colored fellow-humans, who they had convinced themselves were not human at all. (A few more references to capitalism in addition to racism as a driving force of Western expansion would have been welcome to this reviewer.) The way Mishra insists on the need to break out of the narrow-mindedness of the White-Western standard world history is nothing short of impressive for its erudition, in particular with respect to the way the history and prehistory of antisemitism and pro-Israelism fit in the modern era of violent, racist-imperialist “globalization.” One does not have to buy all ramifications and polemic exaggerations of postcolonial theory—although this reader, hitherto shamefully underinformed, has not found much to contest in its application by Mishra to the Gaza case—to concede that social theory in the world after Gaza will have to incorporate some of its central topics and insights in order to be credible not just morally but also scholarly.

Germany, Israel’s second come-what-may unconditional supporter, might even more than the United States be a site for research on the Western conversion after 1945 from anti- to philosemitism. With its stony equanimity in the face of uninhibited cruelty, its studied absence of moral emotion, the icy silence of its political as well as its intellectual class, from journalists to professors, from movie directors and artists to writers, even among students to the extent that they were raised in Germany and want to make a career there, Germany once again appears as an extreme case of political derangement. Both Fassin and Mishra do pay particular attention to the German version of State Israelmania.⁴ Nevertheless, what is going on in Germany these days is still waiting to be fully understood—the transition to a fanatic philosemitism identified as anti-Palestinianism, looking the other way with the same old moral indifference, the same opportunistic silence, the same cold-hearted cowardice. In the following I’ll address some of the factors that I believe are at play here, hoping to be forgiven for using the fine books by Mishra and Fassin as an occasion to speculate about some of the more frightening peculiarities of my home country.

Notes on Germany’s Gaza⁵

Germany is not the only place where traditional sources of social cohesion, collective identity and political allegiance have been drying up in the era of globalized neoliberalism, undermining the legacy institutions of postwar democratic politics. Adding to uncertainty over collective identity and economic security were high levels of immigration, in particular in the wake of the opening of the German borders in 2015, the true birthdate of the AfD. In response to immigration and its discontents, there were early on calls from the center-right for more vigorous insistence on and enforcement of what in the jargon of the spin doctors of the time was called a German *Leitkultur*: a “lead culture” defining the Germanness to be respected if not internalized by immigrants, would-be as well as

rather-not-be Germans. Tentative lists of essentially German attitudes and practices changed, but they always included items expected to be considered un-Islamic by parts of the Muslim community, from children enjoying pork at school lunches to women walking the streets without headscarves.

Also encompassed by increasingly authoritative definitions of German *Leitkultur* was acceptance of a special, generation-spanning responsibility for the Holocaust, with a civic duty derived from it that included support for the state of Israel's "right to exist," in whatever borders it may choose for itself. When after October 7 young immigrants, in particular students, with roots in the Middle East began publicly to express their solidarity with the Gazan victims of the Israeli occupation, the German government, in line with the national Israel lobby, made it clear, if necessary with the help of the police and the courts, that German *Leitkultur* was binding not just on indigenous Germans but also on immigrants, from wherever. To be on the safe side, antisemitism, in the Holocaust Remembrance Association's "working definition," was effectively declared unconstitutional, by way of a Bundestag resolution that is not formally legislation and therefore outside of the jurisdiction of the Constitutional Court.⁶

Subsequently *Israelkritik*, for a while grudgingly tolerated as long as it limited itself to the means rather than the ends of Israeli warfare, came to be generally redefined as anti-semitic.⁷ In effect, this made anti-Islamism, in particular anti-Palestinianism, a welcome expression of anti-antisemitism, drawing a sharp line between good anti-antisemitic Germans and bad antisemitic anti-Germans, with or without a German passport. Not only did this establish a quasi-canonical *Staatsraison* version of German civic culture, adherence to which can be and is being tested by questionnaires administered to applicants for naturalization. It also caters to anti-Muslim and anti-immigration sentiment among anti-immigration voters, as it promises to make it more difficult or less attractive for Muslims to immigrate, in effect instrumentalizing the Holocaust to reserve *Deutschland den Deutschen* (Germany to the Germans). While devised to lure voters away from the AfD, it helped the AfD replace the old antisemitism of the German right as a social glue for a German *Volksgemeinschaft* with a new antimuslimism, enabling the AfD regardless of its ethno-nationalist dog-whistling to present itself as a staunch supporter of Israel and the German state's complicity with it.

Alignment with a *völkische* party like the AfD is not the only problem for the German moral economy in defining support for Israel in Gaza as a fight against antisemitism. Deeper meanings and ambivalences come into play here, besetting the German collective consciousness as it grapples with its memories of guilt and its desire for redemption, the latter to be achieved by institutionalizing the former. At the center of this is the dogma of the uniqueness, the incomparability of the Holocaust—the most consequential contribution of the philosopher Jürgen Habermas to German political culture. The idea grew out of the so-called *Historikerstreit* (the "battle of the historians") when Habermas in 1986, half a decade before reunification, attacked the claim, then put forward by a historian, Ernst Nolte, considered close to the bourgeois right and the new Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, that the German *Rassenmord* of European Jewry had somehow been a "causal reaction" of the German bourgeoisie to the Bolsheviks' *Klassenmord* during and after the October Revolution.⁸ According to Habermas, by thereby making the Holocaust appear as one twentieth-century state massacre among others, Nolte and those who

took sides with him diminished and trivialized the German crime, with the intention to play down or deny the lasting culpability of Germany as a country, so as to open the way toward a more self-confidently nationalist German foreign policy and out of its commitment to European integration. With the Holocaust no longer categorically different from what other countries had done and were doing, the sense of enduring guilt that, presumably, had after the war served to delegitimize any assertion of a German “national interest,” let alone German leadership in Europe, might wither away, and the “German question,” as it had so destructively occupied Europe in the first half of the twentieth century, would be back.

Habermas’ injunction against comparison soon became part of the body of rules, informal and formal, that regulate *bienpensant* political discourse in Germany.⁹ Today it is not just denying the Holocaust but also “belittling” (*verharmlosen*) it that is a crime in Germany, according to Section 130 of the Criminal Code, which deals with *Volkshetze* (public incitement to hatred). The language, as amended again and again over the years, is so complex as to be easily unintelligible for nonlawyers and only hardly intelligible for lawyers. Basically, section 130 makes it a criminal offense (a) to deny the Holocaust, (b) to place it in the same category as other, “normal” crimes, thereby denying its uniqueness, and (c) to incite hatred against someone by accusing them of committing a Holocaust-like deed. As a result, any comparison, in political rhetoric or professional historiography—like for example with the extermination of the two Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in 1945 (two in order to test competing models of nuclear bombs developed by the United States for use, originally, against Germany); or with the protracted Napalm bombing of Vietnamese peasants; or with the bombing of Hamburg (“Operation Gomorrah”) in July, 1943 by the UK air force under “Bomber Harris”—is not just morally frivolous in Germany, which it very well may be, but also punishable in law as it might reduce the Holocaust to one crime against humanity among others, perhaps because this is believed to somehow legitimate a presumably enduring German penchant for racist mass murder.¹⁰ Not least, it may legally be an insult of those whose actions are being compared to the Holocaust, provided they are German allies, and an antisemitic one to boot if the compared and thereby insulted party is the state of Israel.¹¹

In normal intellectual life, of course, comparison is the only way by which the nature of something, including its uniqueness, can be empirically established. What is forbidden to compare is thereby *a priori* assigned to a category of its own, with $N = 1$, governed by laws and principles of its own, particular rather than universal, meta-physical in the sense of out of reach for this-worldly, “physical” causalities and theories, rendering their application an error in category.¹² The taboo against what in current German legal and political jargon is called “relativization”¹³ of the Holocaust, *relating* it to something else in order to understand it better—understand like in *verstehende Soziologie*¹⁴—applies also to the Hamas attack of October 7, rendering it blasphemous to relate that attack causally to a prehistory that includes, for example, 16 years of blockade and hundreds of helpless victims of what is called in Israeli military jargon “mowing the grass”¹⁵—as Judith Butler had to find out when in response to her *Relativierung* she was declared an antisemite in Germany.¹⁶

The injunction against “relativization” can also be used to justify a refusal to apply international law to Israel’s war against Gaza and the Palestinians generally, and is

extensively used in Germany for the purpose. The Holocaust being incomparable, the Israeli-Likud claim to the whole of Palestine, after all a consequence of the Holocaust, must be incomparable as well. From this it follows that the means used by Israel to enforce that claim cannot be genocidal because a state can be accused of genocide only if it is a state like all others, subject to the same rules. Israel, the redemption from the Holocaust, cannot be subject to such rules, holding it to them amounting to antisemitism. This is why an Israeli historian like Omer Bartov, who spent his life studying genocide in all its beastly mutations, would risk having to stand trial for antisemitism and go to jail in Germany if he stated publicly that his research has shown, which he says it to his horror has, that Israel's war in and on Gaza is indeed a case of what he has studied.

An example of how in the German mind the uniqueness of the Holocaust breeds immunity for the state of Israel not just from German disapproval but also from international law is the public statement titled "Principles of Solidarity" issued by Jürgen Habermas, together with three others, a little more than a month after October 7, the Israeli destruction of Gaza well under way.¹⁷ In it Habermas speaks of an "attack by Hamas which cannot be surpassed in cruelty" (*den an Grausamkeit nicht zu überbietenden Angriff der Hamas*; in Habermas' own English translation this comes out, for tactical reasons one assumes, as "Hamas' extreme atrocity"), moving Hamas by—although implicit—comparison to the Nazi level, so that what he calls "Israel's response" cannot possibly be as "cruel" as Hamas' stimulus. Next Habermas declares "retaliation" to be "justified in principle," without mentioning any international law that might set limits to such retaliation. He then asserts apodictically that "despite all the concern for the fate of the Palestinian population"—no such concern showing anywhere in his "principles of solidarity"—"the standards of judgement slip completely when genocidal intentions are attributed to Israel's actions" as these "in no way justify antisemitic reactions, especially not in Germany" (less so elsewhere?). Having attribution of genocidal intentions thereby identified as antisemitic, the statement concludes: "All those in our country who have cultivated antisemitic sentiments and convictions behind all kinds of pretexts and now see a welcome opportunity to express them uninhibitedly must abide by this."

In fact, nowhere have debates on whether Israel's Gaza massacre meets some legal definition of genocide been conducted with the same dead-panned sophistry as in Germany—as though it made all the difference if a high-technological, deeply asymmetric mass slaughter of a defenseless population and the systematic destruction of its material conditions of life was technically a genocide or just something narrowly short of one. Simple abductive reasoning—"If it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, then it probably *is* a duck"—does not penetrate the fortifications of the German heart of stone, protected from emotions by a strange combination of *Sachlichkeit* and cowardice. Especially when what is at stake is German *Staatsraison*, there will always be a lawyer delivering a reassuring expert opinion, no matter how bizarre; in Germany serviceable lawyers have always been in abundant supply. One example is a prominent scholar in international law, co-director of an even more prominent international law research institute. Together with others she represented Germany before the International Court of Justice, where Germany had appeared without having to, to argue, along Habermasian lines, that whatever was going on in Gaza, it was not and

could not possibly be genocide. One reason why this had to be so she later pointed out in a named article in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, written together with an Israeli colleague.¹⁸ The article claimed that while it was true that leading ministers in the Israeli government had publicly expressed their firm intention to exterminate the population of Gaza, by bombing and starving them to death, it had to be considered that the Israeli army, which after all insists on being “the most ethical army in the world,” was known to refuse orders that were in breach of humanitarian martial law. To quote: “In practice, Israel’s war tactics and specific operations are determined almost exclusively by the army. There are signs (!) that the army takes its obligation to comply with the law of armed conflict very seriously. Furthermore, the army’s activities are not determined solely by the orders of its generals. A characteristic element of IDF culture is the extensive discretion granted to lower-level commanders and soldiers. An attack on civilian infrastructure is subject to a chain of approvals, but de facto, the final decision rests with the soldiers on the ground.”¹⁹

Israel’s war on the people of Gaza (for Habermas just a “population”) has left and leaves behind ruins wherever you look, certainly in Gaza itself where it is estimated that just removing the rubble will take a decade or more, but also in Israel whose citizens have already begun to leave their country in droves. The same is true for the countries that continue to help Israel carry out and legitimate its Gaza genocide, countries where a sense of public integrity and political morality would urgently have to be restored as long as this is still possible; and for the institutions of international law that will be so dearly needed as the world is grappling for a new, multipolar order.²⁰ Many more books will and must be written on “the world after Gaza.” But whatever that world will be like when it will perhaps materialize, Gaza will always be part of it, like the colonies and the slave economy of the Age of Enlightenment, like Auschwitz and Warsaw, like Hiroshima and Nagasaki, like Vietnam and all these other places of large-scale mass murder that so often make us despair about ourselves.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Wolfgang Streeck  <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9004-6973>

Notes

1. On November 25, 2025, the Max Planck Society (MPG) reported on its website on a study at its Institute for Demographic Research. (“Gaza: study reveals unprecedented losses of life and life expectancy”) Using sophisticated estimation techniques, the research team found that “the current violent death toll [of the Gaza war] likely exceeds 100,000,” with estimates

- ranging from 100,000 to 112,000 (Gómez-Ugarte et al., 2025). The study and the fact that the MPG obviously could not avoid allowing it to be published are all the more remarkable as it was the MPG that in October 2023, fired an Australian visiting professor for having expressed in private his satisfaction with the Hamas-led open-air prison break in Gaza.
2. It seems justified to conclude from its remarkable resilience that Hamas still enjoys widespread support among the people of Gaza. On October 30, 2025, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) reported on a survey among Gazans, done with impressive methodological sophistication, that popular agreement with Hamas has in fact increased during the 2 years of the Israeli genocide campaign (“Die Hamas bleibt unter Palästinensern stärkste Kraft”, p. 5). For example, 69% of Palestinians in Gaza and the Westbank were found to be against disarmament of Hamas (87% in the Westbank and 55% in the Gaza strip); only 29% overall favored disarmament.
 3. Barghouti was not among the 2,000 Palestinians released from “administrative custody”—unlimited imprisonment without trial—on October 13, 2015, under the first stage of the Trump “Peace Plan.” The Plan, of course, does not envisage any role for the enemy, other than giving up its arms and thereby allowing himself to be killed by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF).
 4. On the same subject Gysi (2023), Andersen et al. (2024), Della Porta (2024, 2025a, 2025b), Friese (2024), Kundnani (2025), Rübner Hansen (2024a, 2024b).
 5. As I realized after completing this manuscript, much of what I say here coincides with Omer Bartov’s recent essay, “Wir haben nichts gewusst,” in *Berlin Review* (2025).
 6. A mere resolution is technically no more than declarative, meaning it is not legally binding on anyone. The way German politics works, however, in particular through anticipatory obedience, it practically works like formal legislation, without being subject to judicial review. On German-style bureaucratic “manufacturing of consent” (Chomsky) see my article on the German Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Verfassungsschutz*) in *London Review of Books* (2024).
 7. Whether the Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (HRA) definition bears this out is contested but immaterial: German public institutions and private organizations read it like this, and make citizens do the same.
 8. For a collection in English of the central texts of the “battle of the historians” see Knowlton and Cates (1993).
 9. For an interesting view of “Habermas as an ethnic thinker par excellence” see Ahmad (2025). Also from a “postcolonial” perspective Saffari and Shabani (2025).
 10. Mentioning other victims of the Nazi-German mass murder machine in one breath with the Holocaust is allowed in law but is not done in polite society. German *Erinnerungskultur* is up to the present day simply not aware of the 2.8 million non-Jewish Polish civilians that were killed under the German occupation, in addition to the 3 million Polish Jews. (This is one of the reasons why German-Polish relations are so bad until today, regardless of both countries being members of the European Union.) The situation is even worse with respect to the 13 to 15 million noncombatant citizens of the Soviet Union (of which 2.7 million are counted as Jews) who were killed by the Wehrmacht and the SS behind the front line, and the estimated 4 million Red Army soldiers who died in German POW camps (more than half of all Soviet POWs) and as slave workers in German factories. When Germany remembers Nazi mass murder, which it does several times a year, it is exclusively the Holocaust that comes to the public mind, in a bizarre way diminishing the uniquely horrifying dimension of the Nazi-German killing spree.
 11. There are no data as to how often section 130 is invoked in criminal prosecution. But to serve its purpose it may be enough that it is simply there.

12. Indeed a sacrilege. The religious connotations are obvious. When Moses asked God for his name, the answer was “I am who I am,” that is, one-of-a-kind. On this follows the injunction against making a “likeness” of God, that is, something that purports to be “like” him even though nothing can be. Noncompliance is a *lèse-majesté*: “For I the Lord Thy God am a jealous God.” *Bienpensant* German thinking insists on the Shoah being and remaining the ultimate human crime, out of competition.
13. *Relativierung*, as in: “den Holocaust relativieren”—relativize as opposed to absolutize, in the sense of detach from context, or singularize, which is what is asked for.
14. In English: interpretive sociology.
15. The IDF technical term for the regular killing of individuals in Gaza who are suspected of being or becoming leaders of a future uprising, using precision missiles, drones, or bombardments.
16. It is, however, not a punishable offense to place the Hamas prison break of October 7 into the same category as the Holocaust—which is done all the time by Israeli and German politicians and journalists, when October 7 is stereotypically described as “the biggest mass murder of Jews since the Holocaust,” turning it into a Nazi-style killing of Jews as Jews for its own sake.
17. See <https://normativeorders.net/news/grundsaeetze-der-solidaritaet-eine-stellungnahme/>. Scroll down for the English translation.
18. Barak Medina and Anne Peters, “Terror militärisch bekämpfen? Der Krieg im Gazastreifen. Ein nuancierter Ansatz” (Fight Terror with Military Means? The War in the Gaza Strip. A Nuanced Approach). *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 7, 2024, Nr. 57, p. 7.
19. My translation, WS. Compare this to the numerous reports in the international press of IDF atrocities, including the systematic torture of prisoners, some of which are quoted by Fassin, Ch. 4, pp. 37–45. More of them, including videos taken by soldiers of their massacres and proudly displayed on TikTok, are appearing every day now. In this context note an article in the *New Yorker* of April 25, 2025, on U.S. military lawyers working with the IDF’s legal department to learn how to lower today’s standards of international humanitarian law. See Colin Jones, “What’s Legally Allowed in War. How U.S. military lawyers see Israel’s invasion of Gaza—and the public’s reaction to it—as a dress rehearsal for a potential conflict with a foreign power like China” (<https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-lede/whats-legally-allowed-in-war>). Apparently, the intention on the American side is to find out from the IDF how to make a case “that the laws of war are far more permissive than many [lawyers] and the public seem to appreciate.” According to the article, “Gaza not only looks like a dress rehearsal for the kind of combat U.S. soldiers may face”—successful conduct of which would require lower legal standards—but can serve as “a test of the American public’s tolerance for the levels of death and destruction that such kinds of warfare entail.” What comes in mind here is less China than a country like Venezuela, after an American invasion to root out “narco-terrorists.”
20. The UN approval of the Trump “Peace Plan” for Palestine being a terrible precedent though.

References

- Ahmad, I. (2025). Habermas as an ethnic thinker *Par Excellence*: On critique, Palestine and the role of intellectuals. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 30(6), 1343–1362. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2025.2466001>
- Andersen, A., Feest, J., & Scheerer, S. (2024). *Apartheid in Israel – Tabu in Deutschland?* ISP.
- Bartov, O. (2025). Wir haben nichts gewusst: Leugnung eines Genozids. *Berlin Review* (Vol. Reader 5, Winter 2026, pp. 49–70).

- Della Porta, D. (2024). Moral panic and repression: The contentious politics of anti-semitism in Germany. *Partecipazione e Conflitto*, 17(2), 276–349. <https://doi.org/10.1285/i20356609v17i2p276>
- Della Porta, D. (2025a). *The contentious politics of antisemitism: Stigmatizing, disciplining and policing protests in solidarity with Palestine*. Verso.
- della Porta, D. (2025b). What's wrong with the German left? *Catalyst*, 9(2 & 3), 148–174.
- Friese, H. (2024). Institutionalized anti-anti-semitism in Germany and its aporias. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 28(1), 6–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13684310241268312>
- Gómez-Ugarte, A. C., Chen, I., Acosta, E., Basellini, U., & Alburez-Gutierrez, D. (2025). Accounting for uncertainty in conflict mortality estimation: An application to the Gaza War in 2023–2024. *Population Health Metrics*, 23(55). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12963-025-00422-9>
- Gysi, G. (2023). *Der Fall Ulrike Guérot: Versuche einer öffentlichen Hinrichtung*. Neu-Isenburg: Westend
- Knowlton, J., & Cates, T. (1993). *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler? Original Documents of the Historikerstreit, the Controversy Concerning the Singularity of the Holocaust*. Humanities Press International.
- Kundnani, H. (2025). *Hyper-Zionism: Germany, the Nazi Past and Israel*. Verso.
- Rübner Hansen, B. (2024a). The New German Chauvinism—Part I. LeftEast. Source: <https://lefteast.org/the-new-german-chauvinism-part-i/>
- Rübner Hansen, B. (2024b). The New German Chauvinism—Part II. LeftEast. Source: <https://lefteast.org/the-new-german-chauvinism-part-i/>
- Saffari, S., & Shabani, A. (2025). Palestine, and the Colonial Unconscious of German Critical Theory. *Middle East Critique*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19436149.2025.2481672>
- Streeck, W. (2024). Anti-constitutional. Review of “Verfassungsschutz: Wie der Geheimdienst Politik macht”, by Ronen Steinke. *London Review of Books*, 46(16), 2024.